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WALKER OMITTS FUNDING FOR INVESTIGATION OF OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTINGS
State Budget Impact on Madison Teen's Death

MADISON- Just days after Wisconsin Attorney General Brad Schimel appeared before the Joint Finance Committee, to ask for reinstatement of the Department of Justice's request for five positions designated to assist with officer-involved shooting investigations, Madison was rocked by the death of an unarmed Madison teen at the hands of law enforcement. Senator Lena Taylor (D-Milwaukee), a member of the state's budget committee, understood the need for Schimel's request all too well.

"The 1981 death of Ernest Lacy, while in the custody of Milwaukee police officers, served as a catalyst to address these questionable events in the legislature" said Taylor. After Lacy's death, it would take more than ten years to get major reforms regarding review panels for officer involved deaths of residents. State legislators have tried, with some degree of success, to pass bills to address policing practices and investigations of deaths of unarmed African-American men while engaging police. Their work has resulted in laws being passed to address training for officers around issues of cultural competency and mental illness.

Most recently, Taylor and her colleagues were able to get legislation enacted in 2014 that requires outside agencies to lead investigations of officer-involved deaths. Just seven days after the law passed, Dontre Hamilton was killed by Milwaukee Police Officer Christopher Manney. The outcomes of the Hamilton investigation have already come under fire. Many are concerned that the required process was not properly administered because of implementation time and an overburdened justice system, as agencies are turning to the Department of Justice to handle these investigations.

"The Attorney General was right to request the additional positions and Governor Walker was wrong to remove them from his final budget" said Taylor. There have been more than twenty officer involved shootings in the state since Dontre Hamilton was killed.

These cases are labor intensive and require a huge commitment of resources to ensure timely review. “It is irresponsible to create the process for the investigations and then not adequately fund the work. We owe it to Milwaukee’s Michael Bell Jr., Derek Williams, and now Madison’s Tony Robinson, to ensure that officer involved deaths are investigated fairly. I owe it to my son.” Taylor concluded.

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